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CAPTAIN STEEL'S DILEMMA.

A STORY OF THE BRITISH VOLUNTEER FORCE.

THERE are none of us (the present Reader of course excepted), however charming and irresistible, without our faults. Fauntleroy, one of the pleasantest men in London, was addicted to forgery. Robespierre, surnamed 'the Incorruptible,' for his steadfastness of purpose, had a weakness for the Guillotine. Caesar, who never turned his back upon a military foe, fled from the sheriff's officer. Madame Laffarge was young, beautiful, and accomplished, but she had a passion for the administration of arsenic. The benevolent Rousseau, who devoted himself to his fellow-creatures, sent his own children to the Foundling. Henry VIII., a genuine adorer of the fair sex— But enough of examples. I have quoted sufficient to shew to posterity that my hero, Captain Hippolyte Steel, adjutant of the Royal Blankshire Volunteers, was not the first person recorded in history whose otherwise unexceptionable character was marred by a defect. He was good-looking and patriotic, courageous and genteel; he had four hundred a year of his own in land; never smoked tobacco; was a *bond fide* member of the Church of England, and the best shot in his regiment—but he was not Punctual. There was the rub. He had indeed a conventional respect for Time, just as men of fashion have for Women, but his behaviour towards the same was abominable. In drill, it is true, he made his men keep time; but we all know how easy it is to correct the faults of others. He never kept it himself: I think I may really say *never*.

Of course, there is a great deal of rubbish talked about the value of time. Commercial gentlemen, who pull out their watches, and mutter 'Tut, tut,' when the omnibus stops at the corner, do not impose upon the world so much as they hope to do. We are well aware it is not really a vital matter whether they begin reading the newspaper at their office at ten precisely or at 10.15. The City would not collapse if they were even an hour

late, nor (between ourselves) would it be of much consequence even to *them*. They are a set of humbugs as respects the importance of their every moment; it is one of the engines that they employ to persuade the public of the gigantic character of their operations. As though one day was not just as good as another for making money! It is curious that even the rank and file of the commercial army affect this exaggeration of the value of their time. 'Give me twenty-four hours to turn about me,' says some poor wretch surrounded by creditors, 'and you shall all be paid.' What is the good of his turning round in twenty-four hours, like the globe itself? 'Time is money,' runs their foolish proverb; whereupon, it was once wittily observed: 'Then, if you give me time, it is the same thing as if I give you money.' Which is quite a new way to pay old debts.

Lawyers also make a great deal of fuss about the value of their time, but with better reason; for they charge folks not for what they do for them, so much as for the time they take in doing it; which is one reason, among many, why lawsuits are so prolonged. It is to the credit of the other professions that they do not boast themselves in this particular; for although the clergy are emphatic about the value of time, it is not upon mere Time's account, but on the relation which it bears to Eternity. They may make vital questions out of many foolish things, but I never heard of their attaching supreme importance to their sermons beginning exactly as the clock strikes twelve; while, as to ending them at any particular time, I have generally noticed their congregations to be more solicitous about that than themselves. We find, indeed, it is the man who does the most work who has always the most time to give to others, and the idlest dog who has always 'no time to spare': he fritters away the hours he ought to employ in labour, and then complains how closely he has been kept to his desk. It is so much easier to tell how long you have been working, than to explain what you have done.

I have written this much to shew that I am not myself a blind devotee of Time, and therefore apt

to judge Captain Hippolyte Steel with harshness. I have no personal feeling in the matter whatever: I have never waited dinner for him, nor any other man, one minute. People who do so at the risk of their Whitebait being spoiled, pay a very poor compliment both to their own palates and to those guests who have arrived at the proper time. But all persons have not the courage to be just, and Hippolyte's prospects were blighted by a circumstance which, at first sight, seemed to reflect credit upon him. The Newmans of Eaton Place once waited twenty-five minutes for him, and got their turbot spoiled. This, of itself, only shewed that the Newmans, being *parvenus*, were ready to abase themselves before the heir-presumptive of a baronetcy; but old Bullion, the banker, unhappily for Hippolyte, was also of the party, and not at all inclined to abase himself. I heard what he muttered over that fish in rage, but I do not venture to repeat it. When the poor unconscious captain, drawing his chair towards him in a friendly manner at dessert, inquired: 'And how is Miss Margaret, sir, to-day?' he replied: 'And what the devil is that to you, sir?' Margaret Bullion being the banker's only daughter and heiress, who had been hitherto understood to be the *fiancée* of the gallant adjutant of Volunteers. Never was unpunctuality so punished.

'Am I to be kept waiting, and get my turbot spoiled, because this son of a baronet chooses to dawdle?' was all that the remonstrances of Margaret and her Bridemaids (elect) could for weeks elicit from the old gentleman.

At last, when she insisted with tears: 'But he will never, never be late again, papa,' he was so far mollified as to permit the courtship to be renewed upon that basis.

'I am a plain business-man, sir,' remarked he to the captain, 'and have always met my engagements to the day. It is as easy to be in time as to be after it; and if you cannot conquer a bad habit, you are not the sort of person I wish to see married to my daughter. You understand, therefore, that if you aspire to be her husband, you will not be late again for any important matter such as dinner, and least of all when I am one of the company.'

Captain Steel was proud, but he also doted upon Margaret, and he swallowed his resentment, and submitted. He only lived for her and the Volunteer Force. There was, of course, no pecuniary necessity for his undertaking the duties of an adjutant; but he liked the work, and did it well. He was always too late, of course; but when he once begun, he made up for lost time. His men adored him, and he would put himself to any inconvenience—short of being in time—to serve them. He had a rifle-butt erected in his own grounds, so that those to whom it was nearer than where the regimental target stood, might come and practise there. There was a shot-proof house for the marker upon one side of it, and all complete.

The time for Hippolyte's marriage was drawing very near, and it was not his intention to be late for that, I promise you. Indeed, since that edict of his future father-in-law, he had much improved in respect to punctuality, as I can certify, who happened to be staying with him during those last bachelor days. However late at night we played billiards, Hippolyte was always 'to the fore' at breakfast-time: and the cook was quite astonished

to find Master always at home when the second bell rang.

Upon a certain day, we were engaged to dine with the Bullions at their country-seat in the neighbourhood. I could hardly prevent Hippolyte from driving over there immediately after lunch, so as to be positively sure to be in time; but I represented to him that would only look as if he had no confidence in himself. He would seem like an habitual drunkard, who dares not be merely moderate, but is obliged to take the pledge. If we started at six, we should still have a full quarter of an hour to spare. At four o'clock, Hippolyte had put on his evening clothes, in which he looked remarkably well; but still, as I observed, it was a premature proceeding. 'Never mind,' said he; 'I feel safe in these. I sha'n't have to dress, in case anything should happen to delay us.'

It was quite touching to see his anxiety and desire to amend. 'When I have once got her,' said he (referring to his Beloved Object), 'I'll snap my fingers at Old Bullion, and make a point of never being in time for anything.'

At half-past four, who should ride up on that speedy 'weed' of his but Mr Nolan O'Shaughnessy, of the Royal Blankshire Volunteers, one of those Irish gentlemen to be found in every corps, about whom nobody knows anything, except that there they are? He was sorry to intrude; but he had been accidentally shut out of the regimental competition last week, and was exceedingly anxious to get into Class 2. It was competent for the adjutant to admit him, if he should succeed in satisfying him of his efficiency, which half an hour's practice at the target would suffice to do.

'I doubt that, my good fellow,' said Hippolyte 'for your shooting used to be rather wild; but I can just spare you half an hour.'

So we went out to the butt, O'Shaughnessy leading his thorough-bred, and tethering that attenuated animal to a neighbouring gate. He had characteristically omitted to bring his ammunition with him, which the adjutant had to supply.

When Steel and I had shut ourselves up in the marker's box, which was quite an arbour-like little edifice of turf, with its one aperture close to the target, I remarked to my companion, that our friend from the Emerald Isle had rather an undisciplined appearance.

'He's as mad as a March hare,' said he, 'and knows about as much about shooting. He will never get into the Second Class as long as he lives; only one does not like to seem ill-natured. We shall never have to use the green flag, for he never made a bull's-eye in the course of his existence, and I very much doubt if he will ever make "an outer".'

'What's that?' cried I, as a dull thud on one side of our turf-but followed the discharge of his first shot.

'Oh, he's hit our butt instead of the target, that's all,' returned Hippolyte coolly. 'It's quite shot-proof; never fear.'

'But he must be a lunatic,' remonstrated I. 'Why do you let him shoot at all?'

'I can't stop him.—By Jove! how quick he fires; but it will be all the sooner over.—Stop a bit; you mustn't distract an adjutant's attention.—I don't know whether that was a hit or not; I must go out and see.—I suppose he knows that the red flag means Stop Firing.' Hippolyte put out the signal in question, waved it in the usual

manner, and then stepped out himself. An instant afterwards, there was a sharp crack, and then a bullet whizzed within half an inch of his left ear.

'Goodness gracious,' cried Hippolyte, hastily re-entering his ark of safety; 'that blackguard nearly shot me. It shews he had no *malice pre-pense*, or else he would not have been so near. But the idea of his disregarding the red flag! Confound his ignorance, I'll have him drummed out of the corps.'

All this time, quite a storm of bullets was hurtling about our ears. If rapid firing, altogether independent of aim, could have insured Mr O'Shaughnessy's promotion, he would already have been in the Second Class. Not a single bullet, however, hit the target.

At this moment, a terrible incident occurred: out of the thymy moss-clad seat on which we sat, there flew an enormous insect with an appalling boom, and began to circle around us. I am not well acquainted with the entomology of the country, and I concluded it to be only a bumble-bee. But I noticed Hippolyte turn pale, and wave the red flag with frantic excitement. At this moment, another bumble-bee flew out, and joined the mazy circles of its predecessors.

'What a noise these bumble-bees make,' said I, 'in this confined space; and I don't think I ever saw such big ones.'

'Hush!' said Hippolyte. 'Do not enrage them; they are hornets. I have no doubt that we are sitting upon a nest of them!'

Imagine our position, in a diminutive sentry-box, five feet high by four feet wide, tenanted by hornets, and the only means of egress exposed to the murderous fire of a madman.

'If this reptile stings my nose, it will be double its size in half a minute,' said Hippolyte, with the calmness of despair. I knew the poor fellow was thinking of how he could present himself in such a condition to his Beloved Object. A lady's lip is none the worse, as the poet tells us, if it does look as though 'a bee had stung it newly;' but the case is widely different in respect to a gentleman's nose and a hornet. Still, the gallant captain did not lose his presence of mind. 'If you can find the little hole from which these infernal villains escaped,' said he, 'stop it quietly up with your finger, or anything.'

'Not with my finger, if I know it,' returned I, endeavouring to pacify the hornet that was devoting itself to me by blowing gently at it; 'but I will try the handle of my penknife.'

This brilliant idea was executed with the most complete success. There was a noise as of about twelve church organs in the seat beneath us, but it was muffled. The penknife exactly fitted. Agitated, I have no doubt, by the stifled voices of their relatives, the two outside hornets whizzed about us like catherine-wheels. We dared not move a muscle, except that Hippolyte kept on waving the red flag, which only seemed to have the same effect upon O'Shaughnessy as on some savage bull—namely, to excite him to frenzy. He appeared to fire about twenty shots a minute, and all wide ones.

'How many cartridges has the villain got?' inquired I.

'Enough for a twelvemonth,' groaned the adjutant. 'They have put the regimental chest under the walnut-tree.—What time is it? If this

unutterable idiot *does* get me late for dinner, I'll wring his neck.'

With the utmost caution, and with an apologetic glance at my hornet, I drew forth my watch. 'We have no time to lose,' said I. 'We have already been here half an hour, and indeed it seems half a day.'

'I'll chance it,' cried Hippolyte, setting his teeth, and gathering himself together for a rush.

'You will be a dead man,' said I, 'if you do. Think of your Margaret, and don't leave a poor fellow alone in this horrid place with a couple of hornets. See, that scoundrel has already put three bullets through the red flag. If you had been there, they would have gone through you instead.'

The argument was unanswerable; Hippolyte gnashed his teeth in impotent rage.

'I am sure,' said I soothingly, 'when old Bullion comes to understand the very peculiar circumstances of our position, he will perceive that punctuality was out of the question. This unmitigated scoundrel, O'Shaughnessy!'

'Arrah, captain jewel, and ain't I in Class 2 by this time?' ejaculated a querulous voice, and at the aperture of our prison-house appeared the hateful features of our jailer, distorted by an adulatory grin.

To throw the red flag in his face, to leap out of the marker's butt, and fly towards the gate at which the speedy 'weed' was tethered, was but the work of a moment; and the next, Captain Steel was flying across the country in full evening dress, in the direction of his dinner. As for me, before O'Shaughnessy could recover from his amazement, I had jerked the penknife out of the hole, and was running homeward at full speed, leaving that gallant Volunteer surrounded by such a host of infuriated hornets that they seemed to darken the air.

So Captain and Adjutant Hippolyte Steel got in time for dinner and for Margaret, after all.

THE USEFULNESS OF EARTHQUAKES.

WE have lately had fearful evidence of the energy of the earth's internal forces. A vibration which, when considered with reference to the dimensions of the earth's globe, may be spoken of as an indefinitely minute quivering limited to an insignificant area, has sufficed to destroy the cities and villages of whole provinces, to cause the death of thousands of human beings, and to effect a destruction of property which must be estimated by millions of pounds sterling. Such a catastrophe as this serves indeed to shew how poor and weak a creature man is in presence of the grand workings of nature. The mere throes which accompany her unseen subterranean efforts suffice to crumble man's strongest buildings in a moment into dust, while the unfortunate inhabitants are either crushed to death among the ruins, or forced to remain shuddering spectators of the destruction of their homes.

At first sight, it may seem paradoxical to assert that earthquakes, fearfully destructive as they have so often proved, are yet essentially preservative and restorative phenomena; yet this is strictly the case. Had no earthquakes taken place in old times, man would not now be living on the face of the earth; if no earthquakes were to take place in future, the term of man's existence would be limited within a range of time far less than that to

which it seems likely, in all human probability, to be extended.

If the solid substance of the earth formed a perfect sphere in ante-geologic times—that is, in ages preceding those to which our present geologic studies extend—there can be no doubt that there was then no visible land above the surface of the water; the ocean must have formed a uniformly deep covering to the submerged surface of the solid globe. In this state of things, nothing but the earth's subterranean forces could tend to the production of continents and islands. Let us be understood. We are not referring to the possibility or impossibility that lands and seas should suddenly have assumed their present figure without convulsion of any sort; this *might* have happened, since the Creator of all things can, of course, modify all things according to His will; we merely say that, assuming that in the beginning, as now, He worked all things according to the laws He has appointed to Himself, then, undoubtedly, the submerged earth must have risen above the sea by the action of those very forms of force which produce the earthquake in our own times.

However this may be, it is quite certain that when once continents and islands had been formed, there immediately began a struggle between destructive and restorative (rather, perhaps, than preservative) forces.

The great enemy of the land is water, and water works the destruction of the land in two principal ways.

In the first place, the sea tends to destroy the land by beating on its shores, and thus continually washing it away. It may seem at first sight that this process must necessarily be a slow one; in fact, many may be disposed to say that it is certainly a slow process, since we see that it does not alter the forms of continents and islands perceptibly in long intervals of time. But, as a matter of fact, we have never had an opportunity of estimating the full effects of this cause, since its action is continually being checked by the restorative forces we shall presently have to consider. Were it not thus checked, there can be little doubt that its effects would be cumulative; for the longer the process continued—that is, the more the land was beaten away, the higher would the sea rise, and the greater power would it have to effect the destruction of the remaining land.

We proceed to give a few instances of the sea's power of effecting the rapid destruction of the land, when nothing happens to interfere with the local action—premising, that this effect is altogether insignificant in comparison with that which would take place, even in that particular spot, if the sea's action were *everywhere* left unchecked.

The Shetland Isles are composed of substances which seem, of all others, best fitted to resist the disintegrating forces of the sea—namely, granite, gneiss, mica-slate, serpentine, greenstone, and many other forms of rock; yet, exposed as these islands are to the uncontrolled violence of the Atlantic Ocean, they are undergoing a process of destruction, which, even within historical times, has produced very noteworthy changes. 'Steep cliffs are hollowed out,' says Sir Charles Lyell, 'into deep caves and lofty arches; and almost every promontory ends in a cluster of rocks, imitating the forms of columns, pinnacles, and obelisks.' Speaking of one of the islands of this group, Dr Hibbert says: 'The isle of Stenness presents a scene of

unequalled desolation. In stormy winters, large blocks of stone are overturned, or are removed from their native beds, and hurried to a distance almost incredible. In the winter of 1802, a tabular mass, eight feet two inches by seven feet, and five feet one inch thick, was dislodged from its bed, and carried to a distance of from eighty to ninety feet.' In other parts of the Shetland Isles, where the sea has encountered less solid materials, the work of destruction has proceeded yet more effectively. In Roeness, for example, the sea has wrought its way so fiercely that a large cavernous aperture two hundred and fifty feet long has been hollowed out. 'But the most sublime scene,' says Dr Hibbert, 'is where a mural pile of porphyry, escaping the process of disintegration that is devastating the coast, appears to have been left as a sort of rampart against the inroads of the ocean. The Atlantic, when provoked by wintry gales, batters against it with all the force of real artillery; and the waves, in their repeated assaults, have at length forced for themselves an entrance. This breach, named the Grind of the Navir, is widened every winter by the overwhelming surge that, finding a passage through it, separates large stones from its sides, and forces them to a distance of no less than one hundred and eighty feet. In two or three spots, the fragments which have been detached are brought together in immense heaps, that appear as an accumulation of cubical masses, the product of some quarry.'

Let us next turn to a portion of the coast-line of Great Britain which is neither defended, on the one hand, by barriers of rock, nor attacked, on the other, by the full fury of the Atlantic currents. Along the whole coast of Yorkshire, we find evidences of a continual process of dilapidation. Between the projecting headland of Flamborough and Spurn Point (the coast of Holderness), the waste is particularly rapid. Many spots which are now mere sandbanks, are marked in the old maps of Yorkshire as the sites of ancient towns and villages. Speaking of Hyde (one of these), Pennant says: 'Only the tradition is left of this town.' Owthorne and its church have been for the most part destroyed, as also Auburn, Hartburn, and Kilnsea. Mr Phillips, in his *Geology of Yorkshire*, states that not unreasonable fears are entertained that, at some future time, Spurn Point itself will become an island, or be wholly washed away, and then the ocean, entering into the estuary of the Humber, will cause great devastation. Pennant states that 'several places, once towns of note upon the Humber, are now only recorded in history; and Ravensperg was at one time a rival of Hull, and a port so very considerable in 1332, that Edward Baliol and the confederated English barons sailed from hence to invade Scotland; and Henry IV., in 1399, made choice of this port to land at, to effect the deposit of Richard II.; yet the whole of this has since been devoured by the merciless ocean; extensive sands, dry at low water, are to be seen in their stead.' The same writer also describes Spurn Point as shaped like a sickle, and the land to the north, he says, was 'perpetually preyed on by the fury of the German Sea, which devours whole acres at a time.'

The decay of the shores of Norfolk and Suffolk is also remarkably rapid. Sir Charles Lyell relates some facts which throw an interesting light on the ravages which the sea commits upon the land here. It was computed that when a certain inn was

built at Sherringham, seventy years would pass before the sea could reach the spot: 'the mean loss of land being calculated from previous observations to be somewhat less than one yard annually.' But no allowance had been made for the fact that the ground sloped from the sea. In consequence of this peculiarity, the waste became greater and greater every year as the cliff grew lower. 'Between the years 1824 and 1829, no less than seventeen yards were swept away;' and when Sir Charles Lyell saw the place, only a small garden was left between the building and the sea. We need hardly add that all vestiges of the inn have long since been swept away. Lyell also relates that, in 1829, there was a depth of water sufficient to float a frigate at a point where, less than half a century before, there stood a cliff fifty feet high with houses upon it.

We have selected these portions of the coast of Great Britain, not because the destruction of our shores is greater here than elsewhere, but as serving to illustrate processes of waste and demolition which are going on around all the shores, not merely of Great Britain, but of every country on the face of the earth. Here and there, as we have said, there are instances in which a contrary process seems to be in action. Low-lying banks and shoals are formed—sometimes along stretches of coast extending for a considerable distance. But when we consider these formations closely, we find that they rather afford evidence of the energy of the destructive forces to which the land is subject, than promise to make up for the land which has been swept away; for, in the first place, every part of these banks consists of the debris of other coasts. Now, we cannot doubt that of earth which is washed away from our shores, by far the larger part finds its way to the bottom of the deep seas; a small proportion only may be brought (by some peculiarity in the distribution of ocean-currents, or in the progress of the tidal wave) to aid in the formation of shoals and banks. The larger, therefore, such shoals and banks may be, the larger must, we suppose, be the amount of land which is washed away never to reappear. And although banks and shoals of this sort grow year by year larger and larger, yet they continue always (unless added to artificially) either beneath the surface of the water, in the case of shoals, or but very slightly raised above the surface. Now, if we suppose the destruction of land to proceed unchecked, it is manifest that at some period, however remote, the formation of shoals and banks must come to an end, owing to the continual diminution of the land from the demolition of which they derive their substance. In the meantime, the bed of the sea would be continually filling up, the level of the sea would be continually rising, and thus the banks would either be wholly submerged through the effect of this cause alone, or they would have so slight an elevation above the sea-level that they would offer little resistance to the destructive effects of the sea, which would now have no other land to act upon.

But we have yet to consider the second principal cause of the wasting away of the land. The cause we have just been dealing with acts upon the shores or outlines of islands and continents, the one we have now to consider acts upon their interior. It will, perhaps, hardly be supposed that the fall of rain upon the land could have any appreciable influence in the demolition of

continents; but, as a matter of fact, there are few causes to which geologists are disposed to ascribe more importance. The very fact that enormous deltas have been formed at the mouths of many rivers—in other words, the actual growth of continents through the effects of rainfall—is a proof how largely this cause must tend to destroy and disintegrate the interiors of our continents. Dwelling on this point, Sir Charles Lyell presents the following remarkable illustration: 'During a tour in Spain,' he writes, 'I was surprised to see a district of gently undulating ground in Catalonia, consisting of red and gray sandstone, and in some parts of red marl, almost entirely denuded of herbage; while the roots of the pines, holm oaks, and some other trees, were half exposed, as if the soil had been washed away by a flood. Such is the state of the forests, for example, between Oristo and Vich, and near San Lorenzo. But, being overtaken by a violent thunderstorm in the month of August, I saw the whole surface, even the highest levels of some flat-topped hills, streaming with mud, while on every declivity the devastation of torrents was terrific. The peculiarities in the physiognomy of the district were at once explained; and I was taught that, in speculating on the greater effects which the direct action of rain may once have produced on the surface of certain parts of England, we need not revert to periods when the heat of the climate was tropical.'

Combining the effects of the sea's action upon the shores of continents, and of the action of rain upon their interior, and remembering that unless the process of demolition were checked in some way, each cause would act from year to year with new force—one through the effects of the gradual rise of the sea-bed, and the other through the effects of the gradual increase of the surface of ocean exposed to the vaporising action of the sun, which increase would necessarily increase the quantity of rain yearly precipitated on the land—we see the justice of the opinion expressed by Sir John Herschel, that, 'had the primeval world been constructed as it now exists, time enough has elapsed, and force enough directed to that end has been in activity, to have long ago destroyed every vestige of land.'

We see, then, the necessity that exists for the action of some restorative or preservative force sufficient to counteract the effects of the continuous processes of destruction we have indicated above. If we consider, we shall see that the destructive forces owe their efficiency to their levelling action, that is, to their influence in reducing the solid part of the earth to the figure of a perfect sphere; therefore, the form of force which is required to counteract them is one that shall tend to produce irregularities in the surface-contour of the earth. And it will be remarked, that although *upheaval* is the process which appears at first sight to be the only effectual remedy to the levelling action of rains and ocean-currents, yet the forcible depression of the earth's surface may prove in many instances yet more effective, since it may serve to reduce the sea-level in other places.

Now, the earth's subterranean forces serve to produce the very effects which are required, in order to counteract the continual disintegration of the shores and interior parts of continents; for, in the first place, their action is not distributed with any approach to uniformity over different parts of the earth's crust, and therefore the figure

they tend to give to the surface of that crust is not that of a perfect sphere. This, of itself, secures the uprising of some parts of the solid earth above the sea-level. But this is not all. On a comparison of the various effects due to the action of subterranean forces, it has been found that the forces of upheaval act (on the whole) more powerfully under continents, and especially under the shore-lines of continents, while the forces of depression act most powerfully (on the whole) under the bed of the ocean. It need hardly be said that whenever the earth is upheaved in one part, it must be depressed somewhere else. Not necessarily at the same instant, it should be remarked. The process of upheaval may be either momentarily accompanied by a corresponding process of depression, or the latter process may take place by a gradual action of the elastic powers of the earth's crust; but, in one way or the other, the balance between upheaval and depression must be restored. Hence, if it can be shewn that for the most part the forces of upheaval act underneath the land, it follows—though we may not be able to recognise the fact by obvious visible signs—that processes of depression are taking place underneath the ocean. Now, active volcanoes mark the centre of a district of upheaval, and nearly all volcanoes are found near the sea. It seems as if nature had provided against the inroads of the ocean by seating the earth's restorative forces just where they are most wanted.

Even in earthquake districts which have no active vent, the same law is found to prevail. It is supposed by the most eminent seismologists that earthquake regions around a volcano, and earthquake regions apparently disconnected from any outlet, differ only in this respect, that, in the one case, the subterranean forces have had sufficient power to produce the phenomena of eruption, while in the other they have not. 'In earthquakes,' says Humboldt, 'we have evidence of a volcano-producing force; but such a force, as universally diffused as the internal heat of the globe, and proclaiming itself everywhere, rarely acts with sufficient energy to produce actual eruptive phenomena; and when it does so, it is only in isolated and particular places.'

Of the influence of the earth's subterranean forces in altering the level of land, we might quote many remarkable instances, but considerations of space compel us to confine ourselves to two or three. The slow processes of upheaval or depression may, perhaps, seem less immediately referrible to subterranean action than those which are produced during the progress of an actual earthquake. We pass over, therefore, such phenomena as the gradual uprising of Sweden, the slow sinking of Greenland, and (still proceeding westward) the gradual uprising of Nova Scotia and the shores of Hudson Bay. Remarkable and suggestive as these phenomena really are, and indisputable as the evidence is on which they rest, they will probably seem much less striking to our readers than those which we are now about to quote.

On the 19th of November 1822, a widely felt and destructive earthquake was experienced in Chili. On the next day, it was noticed for the first time that a broad line of sea-coast had been deserted by the sea for more than a hundred miles. A large part of this tract was covered by shell-fish, which soon died, and exhaled the most offensive effluvia. Between the old low-water mark and the

new one, the fishermen found burrowing shells, which they had formerly had to search for amidst the surf. Rocks some way out to sea, which had formerly been covered, were now dry at half ebb-tide.

Careful measurements shewed that the rise of the land was greater at some distance inshore than along the beach. The water-course of a mill about a mile inland from the sea had gained a fall of fourteen inches in little more than a hundred yards. At Valparaiso, the rise was three feet; at Quintero, four feet.

In February 1835, and in November 1837, a large tract of Chili was similarly shaken, a permanent rise of two feet following the former earthquake, and a rise of eight feet the latter.

The earthquake which took place at Cutch in 1819 is, perhaps, in some respects yet more remarkable. In this instance, phenomena of subsidence, as well as phenomena of upheaval, were witnessed. The estuary of the Indus, which had long been closed to navigation—being, in fact, only a foot deep at ebb-tide, and never more than six feet at flood—was deepened in parts to more than eighteen feet at low-water. The fort and village of Sindree were submerged, only the tops of houses and walls being visible above the water. But although this earthquake seemed thus to have a land-destroying, instead of a land-creating effect, yet the instances of upheaval were, even in this case, far more remarkable than those of depression. 'Immediately after the shock,' says Sir Charles Lyell, 'the inhabitants of Sindree saw at a distance of five miles and a half from their village a long elevated mound, where previously there had been a low and perfectly level plain. To this uplifted tract they gave the name of Ullah-Bund, or the "Mound of God," to distinguish it from several artificial dams previously thrown across the eastern arm of the Indus. It has been ascertained,' he adds, 'that this new-raised country is upwards of fifty miles in length from east to west, running parallel to the line of subsidence which caused the grounds around Sindree to be flooded. The breadth of the elevation is conjectured to be in some parts sixteen miles, and its greatest ascertained height above the original level of the delta is ten feet—an elevation which appears to the eye to be very uniform throughout.'

FOUND DEAD.

CHAPTER XVII.—WORSE THAN A SURGICAL OPERATION.

THE interview which Charles Steen had had with Dr Fungus, although it did not produce the desired result (for the doctor, as if to avoid being further pressed to visit the Hall, left Allgrove for his own house, near Newnham, that very afternoon), yet was not without its fruit. The little man's earnest and convincing words had quite inoculated Charles with his own belief, that the late squire of Allgrove had met with no accidental death. There were now, therefore—not to speak of the faint suspicions which actuated the majority of the jury—no less than three persons in the world—himself, Robert the groom, and Dr Fungus, who were persuaded of this upon reasonable grounds. And there was the widow, more deeply impressed, perhaps, with the same conviction than any of the three, although upon no grounds at all. It was quite unnecessary,

however, for the doctor to have laid an injunction of silence upon Charles Steen. The more he thought of this horror—the more strength his new conviction gained—the greater repugnance he felt against moving in the matter. He had not hitherto quite made up his mind as to whether he should inform the rector of Mr Frederick Blissett's late eccentric conduct concerning the charcoal sketch, or not; but he was now quite resolved to be silent on the subject; resolutely determined also to do his best to combat the widow's wild and baseless misgivings, although he had now got his own doubts as well as hers to overcome.

As he passed the rectory, he looked in upon Mr Mellish, and that gentleman—sitting empty-handed and forlorn enough before his study-fire, and thinking of the dead—was unfeignedly glad to see him.

'The sight of you, my dear young friend, this sad afternoon, yonder' (and he pointed in the direction of the churchyard), 'was the only gleam of sunshine that met my eyes. I knew you would be there, however, for I had a letter from Mr Frederick this morning. A strange letter, Steen, for a man to write upon the day before his only brother was to be buried, wholly and solely concerning the goods which he has become possessed of by his death: but then your patron is a strange man.'

'He is, sir,' said Charles hastily; 'and stranger now, I do assure you, than ever. I honestly think, between ourselves, that for the time—so powerfully have recent events worked with him—he is not responsible for what he does, or says, or writes.'

'I hope not,' returned the rector gravely: 'I should be glad to think that such is the case. You are a very young trustee, Steen, and he and I were never very cordial, yet he leaves all his business to be transacted by us two. As for my part in the matter, that does not astonish me so much, for he has sufficient knowledge of me to be sure that he is in safe hands, while friends of his own he never had, except, indeed, his poor brother; but you—whom he has been acquainted with so short a time—must be a great favourite of his, to have such trust reposed in you.'

'So far from that being the case, Mr Mellish, I assure you, upon my word and honour, that I believe Mr Blissett dislikes me.'

'Then he must be mad,' said the rector, with a sharp glance over his shoulder at his young friend.

'Perhaps he is,' said Steen gravely, with his eyes fixed upon the fire. 'I sometimes think he must be.'

'Well, since we are both agreed upon that point,' answered the rector confidentially, 'and since you have already discovered for yourself that Mr Frederick's regard for you does not quite extend to affection, I may say there is a passage in his letter which seems to hint at that latter fact. It reveals nothing to your disadvantage, mind, in any way, but yet it is just the sort of revelation which a warm friend would have kept to himself.'

'He tells you where he found me,' said Steen bitterly, 'and so by implication puts you—and others—on your guard against me. There is not much to be expected, he would say, of a lad picked up at a night refuge.'

'I confess,' replied the rector slowly, 'that such was my impression of what the letter intended to convey. If it was meant to prejudice me against

yourself, it totally failed in its object; it only sank the writer in my estimation. I am sure you were not to blame—it was not through your misconduct, I mean, that you became destitute.'

'You shall judge for yourself, Mr Mellish. I was to blame, at all events, that I did not reveal the matter to you myself, and I am fitly punished by this humiliation. Will you listen to my story from my own lips?'

'Yes, Steen; and I shall believe it implicitly.'

Then the young man rehearsed to the rector the same narrative which we have already heard him confide to his patron in Clifford Street; and Mr Mellish listened with great attention, once or twice making a pencil-note in his pocket-book, as the history proceeded.

'You are not ashamed of me, sir?' pleaded the lad when all was finished.

'No, indeed,' said the rector kindly. 'Why should I be?'

'And don't you think Mrs Blissett and Miss Christie would be ashamed of me?' added Charles eagerly.

'Most certainly not, my boy.'

'Then please to tell them, sir, all about it: how I was a beggar—a pauper—but a few days ago; for I could not, no, indeed, I could not tell them myself.'

'I will acquaint them with all the circumstances, my good lad; and do not fear any change of feeling towards you in those two ladies. For one reason, I am heartily glad to hear all this; since—I don't mind telling you now—I took it into my head at first that, unknown to yourself, you were Mr Frederick's natural son.'

'Did they think that at the Hall?' inquired Charles with burning cheeks and in a trembling voice. 'Did they think I was his son?'

'No. Mrs Blissett, to whom I communicated my suspicion, was positively certain—after your first interview with her—that such was not the case. I do not wish to repeat to you anything said to the disadvantage of your patron, or flattering to yourself; it is enough to say that she combated my opinion very warmly. Indeed, I was almost convinced that I was mistaken, until this letter arrived, which, somehow, once more awakened all my doubts. I firmly believe that it was framed partly with that object. The writer speaks of you exactly as a man would speak of one who had a personal claim upon him in equity, though not in law. He declines all positive responsibility—even to the extent of revealing to us a past, which he deems disgraceful, by way of warning—and yet, in the same breath, as it were, he imposes upon you a considerable trust, and hints at future material benefits to be conferred. He announces his intention, when he has returned from abroad, and can give his own attention to business matters, to send you to Oxford. Did he say anything of that to you?'

'Mr Blissett did just hint at such a thing, sir; but I attached no importance to the remark.'

'It would be a most excellent thing for you, Steen; the university, to one who has brains and diligence, no matter what else he lacks, is the high road to independence and social station.'

'O sir,' cried the young man, clasping his hands, as though some beatific vision had been suddenly presented to him, 'how I would work to gain them!'

'Well, then, why not begin at once? The fruits

of study are never utterly thrown away, at all events; and if, on the other hand, Mr Blissett does carry out this excellent intention, it is most important that it should find you prepared to take advantage of it to the utmost. Now, I will be your tutor. Come to me in a day or two—to-morrow, if you like—and let me find out what you know. I remember enough of the classics, I flatter myself, to put you a long way on the road, which, if all turns out well, you will have to travel.'

'I thank you, sir, from the bottom of my heart,' cried the young man earnestly; 'you do not know what hopes you have kindled within me. How very, very good and kind you are!'

'Tut, tut, sir. All old Pedagogues—and I was a tutor once myself—like somebody to teach. It gives us again that blessed chance of tyranny, which, like your friend Lucius Sylla, we have voluntarily resigned. Pooh, pooh! it is so indeed. You are too ready to incur the sense of obligation, my young friend.'

The untainted virtue of your years
Hath not yet dived into the world's deceit,

or you would not be so thankful for the opportunity of a classical education. A single play of William Shakspeare's, sir, has more of wisdom, fancy, wit, in it than all the—— But there, that's treason. Come; you have wasted time enough on an old fellow like me; I think it likely—since you have not seen the ladies—that they may have something to say to you; and certainly you should communicate to them, as early as possible, Mr Frederick's civil messages. I don't see what he could have done more, since his sister-in-law herself insists upon leaving the Hall, than say: "Take what you wish."

Upon this hint, after once more expressing his sense of the rector's kindness, Charles took his leave, a happier man than perhaps he had ever been before. The idea of going to college had given him new life; something seemed to whisper that those rose-coloured views of the future in which he had indulged might not, after all, be dreams. It was curious, though far from unnatural, that he felt the good-will of the rector, who had promised by comparison so little, far more than that of his patron, who had promised (or at least hinted at) so much. He was far from being ungrateful to the latter for all he had done for him, and fully resolved to be his faithful minister in whatever he should be set to do. But it is possible to confer even material benefits in such a manner as to sow not a single seed of love in the recipient. A bone may be 'chucked' to a dog; but to the starving human creature whom we would inspire with regard for us, it must not be chucked, but bestowed with a gentle hand and gentle words. Thus, although Charles owed (and was dutifully ready to pay) all fealty to his patron, yet he felt towards him none of that affection with which Mr Mellish and Mrs Blissett (not to mention Christie) had inspired him, albeit they had given him nothing but kind words.

Never had the young man's step been so elastic, his heart so light, as when he came in sight of the Hall, on the windows of which—now shutterless for the first time—the beams of the early setting sun were shining brightly. There would surely be a happy time before him, while his patron was abroad, and this place, so near to Miss Christie's future home, was appointed for him to dwell in.

He felt indeed for her bereavement; but it was impossible that the loss which she bewailed (the greatness of it being unknown to him) could sadden him to the same extent, and he knew that the healing touch of time must sooner or later cure her pain. The only thing that weighed upon his mind was the private conference that he must needs presently have with Mrs Blissett: his unwillingness to talk with her upon that subject which she was only too certain to broach, had grown to positive repugnance; and the approaching interview—complimentary to him as was its confidential nature—overshadowed his present, like the contemplation of some necessary surgical operation, *after which* life has nothing to offer us but what is pleasurable. In the meantime, we shudder.

His forebodings were quickly realised. No sooner had he reached the study, than a female servant communicated the expected summons from her mistress that 'she would be glad to see Mr Steen as soon as convenient;' and the young man at once followed the messenger up-stairs, with a cast of countenance that would have suited any of those sombre ministers of the dead of whom the house had only just been cleared. How he secretly anathematised that cowardly little Dr Fungus, who had laid the train of suspicion, and set light to it, and then left him to bear all the consequences of the explosion! Not even a sight of Miss Christie was afforded him to cheer his spirits. The invalid was on her couch as usual, but quite alone.

'I am very glad to see you back again,' Mr Steen, said she cordially, yet in a tone which shewed how little her bruised heart could know of gladness; 'and yet it is very selfish of me to feel so, since this house of mourning is unfit indeed for the home of one like you; and Christie and I are wretched company.'

'I was very willing to return to Allgrove,' replied Charles simply.—'How are you, madam, and Miss Christie?'

'Christie is well, thank God, Mr Steen.—Have you any news for me?'

With a great effort, Charles maintained his calmness. He well knew to what the widow's earnest inquiry referred, but he resolved to avoid the subject, unless it was absolutely forced upon him.

'Yes, dear madam,' answered he; 'much news. Mr Blissett, who still continues far from well—indeed, he seemed certainly worse than when I last saw him—has decided, acting on the advice of his doctor, upon going abroad. He is, in fact, I have no doubt, already gone, and the date of his return is quite unsettled. He bade me say that, since you seemed determined to remove to the cottage, you must of course do so; but, at the same time, expressed his earnest wish that you should take with you from the Hall whatever you pleased; not only such things as might be especially dear to you as—*as mementoes*—but any articles of furniture'—

The widow's wasted but expressive features here exhibited such evident impatience and incredulity, that the young man began to hesitate and stammer, and at length came to a full stop.

'Ay,' said she coldly, and without noticing his embarrassment, 'he is very considerate, this patron of yours.'

'He intends to be so, my dear madam, and I

sincerely trust you will not reject his offers; he did not like your leaving the Hall—"Just as though I had turned them out of it," said he—nor the tone of Miss Christie's letter, which, indeed (for he read it to me), was certainly somewhat cold. I do hope'—

'Have you any news for me, Charles Steen?' repeated the widow in the same deep and earnest tones; 'tidings of another sort than concerning houses and furniture? Or if you have not, have others? Did you give my message to Dr Fungus?'

'Yes, madam; and I have had a long talk with him. He maintains the same opinion which he expressed at the inquest; perhaps all the more obstinately because it is so unpopular. But he will not come and see you. He feels outraged at the ill-treatment which he has, it seems, received from every hand, on account of the evidence he gave before the coroner; and he will have nothing more to do with the matter. His resolution is fixed upon that point.'

'Then I have only you to trust in, Mr Steen,' said the widow gravely. 'For the third time, but not the last (for I *will* know), I ask: "Have you no news?"'

'I was, of course, at the funeral this morning, dear madam,' answered Charles, endeavouring in vain to remain calm. 'There was a vast company present, and their grief was very genuine. If respectful sympathy could mitigate such a blow as has fallen upon you, you would suffer little.'

'I am obliged to them all, Mr Steen. My poor husband was dear to many. When the ear heard him, it blessed him; when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him; he caused the widow's heart—the widow's heart,' repeated she in anguished tones—'to sing for joy.'

'There did not seem to be one in the churchyard, madam, rich or poor, who came there for mere form's sake.'

'Ay; he was not there, then,' murmured she, as though talking to herself. 'If he *had* been—if he had dared to come—and had so much as touched the coffin, his wickedness would surely have been made apparent. It used to be said so, and if such things did ever take place, they would have done so to-day. If he had touched the body, the wound would have broken forth afresh, and the blood cried out against him!'

'Against whom, madam?' inquired Charles in a trembling voice.

A terrible look came over the widow's face, and for the moment, it seemed to Charles that he would have lost his right hand if he could only have recalled his question; but the sudden glow in those hollow eyes as suddenly died out; and she shook her head, as though in reply to some inward thought.

'Against his murderer,' said she slowly; and awful as that answer was, it took a weight off the young man's heart, that had almost stopped its beating. 'Have you no news of him, Charles? I think you have. Yes; you have seen the first footmarks of that trail which will lead at last to the shedder of my husband's blood. You *have* seen them!'

The young man heard no more. The widow's piercing look, her solemn searching tones, her immediate reference to the shadowy but dread suspicion that haunted his own mind: all these things combined to overcome mind and body so

completely, that he lost consciousness, and fell into a sort of faint or swoon. When he came to himself, he was still in the widow's room, sitting in the same arm-chair as before; but his throat was bare, and his neckcloth on the floor, and about him was a sense of fragrance and coolness.

'You are better now, Mr Steen,' whispered a musical and tender voice, and he looked up and saw Christie standing over him, and bathing his forehead with some refreshing scent.

'O yes, poor fellow, you are much better now,' said Mrs Blissett, with a look that conveyed nothing but compassion and kindness.—'Take him out of this sick-room, Christie, into freer air; and see that he has some refreshment at once, for I am sure he needs it.'

The operation was over; but it had been more severe than the patient's worse fears had suggested to him.

CHAPTER XVIII.—SUNSHINE.

Every season has doubtless its own troubles, yet to some of us—if not to many—it is given to enjoy some portion of life almost without alloy; it may be—and, alas! generally is—but a little portion, but while it lasts it is the very foretaste of Paradise. It stands out in such contrast with the rest of our existence, that it is distinctly seen as we look back, no matter over how many an intervening year. It happens almost always at that epoch when the restraints incident to boyhood are removed, yet the responsibilities belonging to manhood have scarce assumed definite shape—when health is most vigorous, when hope is highest, when Life 'goes a-maying' with Youth and Love. And it was upon this blissful period that Charles Steen was about to enter.

If the forebodings of his heart had not deceived him, neither had its anticipations. For the first time in his life, he was living among friends—among those who loved him for his own sake. He had work enough to do to make him appreciate leisure: first, under Mr Mellish's supervision, but very soon independently of his assistance, he controlled the expenses of house and garden (the rents of the estate were collected by a lawyer at Newnham), and kept an account of all things, in the interest of his patron. He set the Hall in order after the manner he judged would be most pleasing in that gentleman's eyes; taking particular care to arrange the extensive though very heterogeneous contents of the library—an apartment the principal use of which had hitherto been for old fogies to play at whist in, when the squire and his lady (years and years ago) chanced to give a ball. He had enough of study (thanks to the good rector, who 'coached' him with great regularity, if not dispatch, for, to say truth, his Greek was getting a little rusty) to make him thoroughly enjoy the hours of holiday. These he spent, sometimes, in ordinary country fashion, in shooting, for there was no lack of guns or game at Morden Hall; or in courting upon the downs, for Mr Groves kept many greyhounds, and the rector had in the exercise of his discretion retained one good horse in the squire's stables, though the rest were disposed of; but chiefly in fishing, not, it must be confessed, because he was particularly partial to that diversion, but because the boat-house adjoined that which belonged to Rill Bank,

the cottage at which the widow and her daughter now resided, and being so near, it was but common civility to 'just step in' and inquire how they were.

If he was successful with rod and line, they reaped the benefit of his good-fortune; and if he was not, what more natural than that he should 'just step in' again, after putting up the boat, to express his regret? When he did not fish, it was surely better taste to 'just step in' in person with the brace of birds he had bagged in the turnips, or the pheasant he had shot in the wood, than to send a servant with his empty compliments; or after a day with Farmer Groves, that, in leaving a hare at the cottage-door, he should 'just step in' to say that it was 'coursed,' which is a matter of culinary importance. It would have been the height of inhumanity to let the poor young fellow dine all by himself in the great house, so he had a standing invitation to dinner at the rectory; and when he did not arrive there at the appointed hour, Mr Mellish sat down without him, being well aware that his young friend had 'just stepped in' at Rill Bank (doubtless upon some matter of the last importance), and been asked to stay to dinner.

Upon these occasions he did not, of course, dine alone with Miss Christie (although there is no reason to suppose that he would have resented even that arrangement), but with her mother also. The meal was served in the drawing-room, into which the invalid was wheeled, sofa and all, from her bedroom, which was contiguous to it. She was not in reality improved in health (although, singular to say, she was no worse), but her indomitable spirit caused her to make greater exertions, now that she considered there was a necessity for them. She would not suffer Christie's existence to be passed as the mere attendant of an invalid; nor permit her to be depressed by melancholy talk. So, if the widow rarely smiled, she never, in her daughter's presence, gave way to passionate grief, and neither avoided nor dwelt upon the topic of their common bereavement. Upon the subject, however, of taking 'what was wanted' from the Hall, Charles found Mrs Blissett quite inexorable. Her dislike of her brother-in-law (although she never expressed it in words) seemed to increase rather than diminish. The very wine she drank (and a little wine was absolutely necessary for her, said the doctors) was procured elsewhere than from her late husband's cellars; and even the game with which her young friend so plentifully furnished her table was received under protest. The widow (by comparison with her former position, at least) was very poor. Two hundred and fifty pounds was the extent of her yearly income, and though she administered it with her usual discretion, it was difficult, particularly on first entrance into a new house, to keep within her means.

Small as Rill Bank was, it was extremely pretty. It was placed high and dry, on a lawn of tolerable size, which ran down to a small wooden terrace (with an arbour at one end, and set with half-a-dozen urns for flowers) skirting the river. A few steps of stone led up to the down-stairs sitting-room, its bow windows ornamented at the top with a circle of painted glass, and looking from the water very gay indeed. But the drawing-room was the gem of the house. No larger than the room beneath it, it commanded one of the most charming river-views imaginable, and one

which was never destitute of life. The Rill was not only navigable in itself, but joined a very large river at Newnham, and not a little barge-traffic was carried on along it, by means of a towing-path on the opposite side. At no great distance was a lock, half seen (as the spring came on) through intervening foliage; and it was a picture of which the eye never tired, to see the great gates slowly open to admit the flood, and the liberated boats come forth into the sunlight to toil or loiter along the water highway; pleasant, beyond description, to listen in the still afternoons to the cry of 'Lok, lok, lok!' from unseen voyagers far down the wooded reach; or to hear the wondrous music welling up from those resonant walls when the rowers sang (as many did) while pent within their watery prison. As the days lengthened and grew warmer, the traffic increased, not only of commerce, but of pleasure, and many a skiff, almost as bright and swift as the river-insects that flitted hither and thither in the sun, shot by the cottage; not seldom, larger boats, too, with holiday folks on board of them—quite gilded galleys of the Cleopatra sort, with cushions of scarlet, and perhaps a band, the strains of which, if failing to satisfy a critical ear on land, were borne charmingly cool and mellow across the stream; while more rarely still, but even more welcome, came the racing boats, in training for some river-regatta, with an accompanying music of their even oar-blades, delightful to listen to as it waxed and waned.

All day long was seen the stately pageant of the swans, except when, not so stately, their curved and snow-white necks went suddenly under water, and they presented themselves reversed—like gigantic water-lilies in bud. From morn to eve, the ferry-boat plied intermittently, now filled with market-folks going forth with baskets filled with produce, or returning with light load; now conveying but a single passenger with dog and gun, or solitary fisherman. The whole river-scene was busy as a fair, and yet so calm and quiet, except for the low melodious unceasing thunder of the hidden lasher. Not seldom, when the days grew warm, did Christie take her seat in punt or skiff, and journey with the youth upon that silent highway; amid the osier isles, from whence the swan upon her nest hissed angrily, while the fierce male ploughed foamy furrows in the wave with his swelling breast, and flapped defiance; or up the back-stream, where the withy baskets, which lay in the stream all night gaping for fish, dried on their high platforms. No prying eyes were there; only the swallows flashed and skimmed around their drifting boat. No sound was heard except the dreamy caws of the circling rooks, or ever and anon, from the distant woods, the monotone of the herald of the summer, whereupon one would say: 'Hush! Listen;' and the other: 'Yes, you're right: it is the cuckoo.'

A happy time, when both on land and stream 'twas

May, from verge to verge,
And May it was, with them, from head to heel.

If the meaning of an idyl lies in two young people, picturesquely circumstanced, doing nothing, and taking the utmost pleasure in their idleness, these river-trips of Christie and Charles Steen might be so called. If another definition of the term needs be sought, it may be found in this, that it was not

long before they began unconsciously to idolise one another.

Fortune, too, as if not content with bestowing on the young man these ethereal and transcendent pleasures, added a bright gleam of material prosperity—gave him a great slice of solid pudding. It came to pass in this wise. Mr Mellish, who had had long on hand an invitation to visit an old college-friend of his, whose living was situated in the neighbourhood of Cayenne Lodge, departed one fine morning on that errand, much to the surprise of those who knew him best. A run up to London for the day was in general the extent of the rector's absence from his parish, it being even whispered that he had become so completely the old bachelor, that he could not sleep away from home; yet in this case he disappeared without saying a word to anybody, for six whole days, the extreme limit of a clergyman's holiday. The churchwardens had almost made up their minds to offer a reward for his discovery, and to appeal to the Home Secretary for a free pardon to all concerned in his assassination, except the actual murderer, when the reverend gentleman suddenly turned up on the Saturday night.

'Where on earth have you been, Mr Mellish, and what have you been about?' cried Steen, who had called at the rectory, after dining at Rill Bank, and to his great joy found his friend and preceptor safe and sound.

'Well, sir, I have been to a place with which you are well acquainted,' returned the rector coolly, 'and have occupied myself solely with your business.'

'I did not know I had any,' said Charles laughing.

'No business, eh? Nothing but pleasure? That's

The primrose way to the everlasting bonfire,

my young friend,' answered the rector, with affected sternness; but the twinkle of his eyes, and the twitching at the corners of his mouth, betrayed that he was in the best of humours, and had some good news to tell. 'Yes,' he went on, 'it is lucky for you, who thus neglect your own concerns, that you have a friend who interests himself in them.'

'I am very lucky in that respect, sir, indeed,' said the young man with a grateful simplicity that went straight to the rector's heart.

'Well, Charley,' said he, 'the fact is, that ever since you told me your history, there was one point that puzzled me not a little. I never doubted your word, my dear boy; I knew you were telling me what you imagined to be the case; but in one instance I did doubt your facts. Thanks to this wise book, and he laid his hand affectionately on a pocket volume of Shakspeare, which lay on the table before him, and had been the companion of his travel, I know something of human nature, more, perhaps, than many who mix much more than I do in what they call "the world," and see nothing but one man and one woman multiplied any number of times. From what you told me of Captain Mangoe's great kindness to you during his life, I thought it in the highest degree improbable that he should omit—being so wealthy a man—to make some sort of provision for you by will. I have now discovered, Charles, that he did so.—There, don't flush up so; it is not much; but you are no longer'—

'A beggar, sir, or a dependant?' interrupted Charles earnestly. 'Is it really true that I am no longer that?'

'Yes: it is true. It was very wrong in Mrs Mangoe to conceal the fact; it was something more than wrong in her to tell you (as I understand was the case) the mischievous falsehood that you were totally unprovided for; but I do not think for a moment she meant to defraud you of your due. She was actuated by a malignant feeling towards yourself, and perhaps she resented any portion, however small, of her late husband's wealth being bestowed upon one who was not his kith and kin. Her own account of the matter—for I brought her to book, I promise you, and frightened her not a little—was, that she thought it better for your moral health (you being of a very audacious and rebellious spirit, sir) that you should imagine yourself to be entirely dependant; but that she had always intended to let you know the true state of the case sooner or later. She says that her having omitted to do so has been very much on her mind ever since you disappeared from Madden House, and that part of the county, without affording her an opportunity of telling you that her dear husband had not forgotten you. I assure you she put her handkerchief to her eyes, and seemed quite affected; but they do say it's only her grief that is affected, and that she is engaged to be married to her sons' tutor, who is about half her age. But as far as you are concerned, Steen, she has made all the reparation that could be expected, and we have no right, in charity, to say' (and here I am afraid the rector winked) 'that she has been frightened into it. The long and short of the matter is, that a hundred a year was settled upon you for life by excellent Captain Mangoe, and you have had the first year's allowance paid in advance (the least she could do, I told her, considering to what straits her culpable concealment of the matter had exposed you); and here's the money in twenty-five-pound Bank of England notes.'

It was pleasant to see the rector counting them out one by one with the most business-like gravity, while the recipient could apply himself to nothing save vain endeavours to express his fervent thanks towards his living friend, while his heart was full of no less gratitude towards him who had thus stretched forth to him a helping hand, as it were, from the very grave itself.

'This timely gift,' observed the rector, as they parted late with cordial 'good-nights,' 'will now, with some slight additional help (which, I daresay, will not be wanting, even though Mr Blissett should alter his mind upon the matter), insure our Oxford plan—such power has gold to mould our dreams into realities. In the meantime, don't you be extravagant, my young millionaire.'

Which Charles, with a pleasant laugh, promised not to be. Yet, at that moment, the spendthrift had a scheme in his head for disposing of three-fourths of the money, and managed to put it into effect before the next week was out.

One of Mrs Blissett's greatest pleasures in old times was to hear her daughter, who had a very charming 'touch' on the piano, play and sing to her. The widow had been herself a musician before her physical affliction, and she dearly loved to listen to the harmonies which she could no longer evoke. When, however, she left the Hall, she declined to take with her the little cottage-piano which used to stand in her sick-room

(notwithstanding that Mr Mellish endeavoured to convince her that it was as much her own and belonged as little to her brother-in-law as her own bonnet and shawl); and so there was no music at Rill Bank. But on the Friday next after the rector's return, there arrived from the railway station an immense parcel, which turned out upon inspection to be a very small but very pretty piano, and the carrier knew nothing about it except that there was nothing to pay.

'Who can it have come from?' cried Christie, her eyes dancing with delight as this fairy casket was brought up-stairs. 'What an exquisite little thing it is, and how nicely it will stand here between the bookcase and the window! Now, my own dear mamma, you really must not look so grave. It can't come from Uncle Frederick, you know, because we gave him to understand that we did not want such a thing.' (Charles had had to frame some excuse about music being too much for the poor widow just at present, to account to his patron for her having left the instrument at the Hall.)

'No, Christie, it does not come from your uncle; but it may come from some one else from whose hands we are equally bound not to accept it. I am much afraid that the good rector, who, I am sure, has no such sum to spare as this must have cost, has'—

'Oh, dear me, I am so sorry,' interrupted Christie with a disappointed look; 'how foolish of me. Of course, it is the rector. Who else would have thought of such a pleasant surprise for us? Yes, it is certainly he. However, as it can't be sent back to-day, there will be no harm in my just running my hands along it. Come; I will play you one of your dear old tunes, mamma—just one old tune, for the sake of auld langsyne.'

So she sat herself down forthwith, and played so tenderly—so very differently from that rattling off an air which so many of our young chigoned performers now aim at, under the name of 'rapid execution'—that Mrs Blissett could not say 'Nay' to her playing another, and then another. She wept—the poor lady—but they were not tears of bitter sorrow; tears, rather, which

From the depth of some divine despair,
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
On looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

She was sorrowful, but not unhappy, as those who have no expression for their woe; and presently, as Christie went on with air after air, here and there singing a tender old song with a tender voice, that seemed as proper to her face as its perfume to a flower, the widow's face grew calm, and even bright. Her pain was fairly drowned in the sweet sounds.

In the midst of this, who should happen to 'just step in' but Mr Charles Steen!

'Did you ever see such a beautiful little piano? A present from that naughty, extravagant man, Mr Mellish!' exclaimed Christie. 'So of course we can't keep it. And yet I could almost cry at having to part with it. This last hour has been such a treat—has it not, dear mamma?'

'It has been a great treat, my darling,' answered the widow; 'but we must learn not to treat ourselves at the expense of others.'

'I am sure, dear Mrs Blissett,' said Charles earnestly, 'that if the donor were here, he would

already consider himself richly paid for his investment: and talking of treating yourselves, I hope you are not going to be so selfish as to stop playing, now I am come.'

So some more tunes—somewhat less touching ones—were played, to the visitor's great satisfaction, until, in the middle of one of them, Christie suddenly stopped short with: 'Mamma, what *shall* we do? Here's that naughty, extravagant man coming up the lawn!'

It was indeed the rector himself; and as to swathing that piano in its body-clothes of matting (let alone putting on its unmentionables), before he could get up-stairs, that was out of the question. Moreover, the strains of the music had already reached him through the open window, for he was clapping his hands and crying 'Bravo, bravo!' as though he had white kid gloves on—only a little louder than is usual at the Opera.

'What magic music have you got there?' cried he from beneath the window.

'Come up and see, you wicked man!' cried Christie; then turned to her mother with: 'How ever shall we make him take it back?'

But before she could make reply, the rector was in the room.

'Well, I must say it's charming,' exclaimed he, looking at the instrument, instead of the performer or the audience. 'But, upon my word, Mrs Blissett, I had no idea you were such a prodigal! You would not allow your old piano to be brought across the road from one house to the other, and here you spend seventy guineas—for I am sure that never cost a penny less—upon a new one! However, it is a real beauty, and will, I doubt not, pay you excellent interest in the way of pleasure.'

'I did not buy it,' said Mrs Blissett. 'It arrived here to-day, we know not from whom or whence; and indeed we thought'—

'That it had come from *me*?' laughed the rector. 'I do assure you, you are mistaken there. In the first place, I am not half so liberal as you would credit me for being; and secondly, while you had a piano of your own—yes, of your very own, madam—at yonder house, I should not have dreamed of getting you another.'

'But who *can*, then, have sent it to us?' exclaimed the widow. 'Our friends in the county have been very kind; but I know how ill is the companionship of wealth and poverty, and I have steadily kept myself aloof from them; nor is any one, that I know of, sufficiently familiar with us to know that such an instrument would be acceptable.'

'It's this young millionaire, then!' exclaimed the rector in a rapture. 'It's just the sort of abominable trick that he would like to be at.'

'O Mr Steen!' cried the widow. ('O Charles!' cried Christie involuntarily; but in the excitement that ensued, the affectionate familiarity passed fortunately unnoticed, save by the ear for which it was intended.) 'This is really too bad—and too good—of you. To give away your first year's income in this way cannot be suffered.'

'I have experienced more pleasure within the last half-hour, my dear Mrs Blissett,' said Charles quietly, 'than I have had during all my life before. If you broke that piano up for firewood, I have already had my money's worth of it; so, pray, do not speak of that. It was, however, a much cheaper toy than you imagine. Please to accept it, madam, from one who, if he were indeed the

millionaire that Mr Mellish speaks of, could never, never repay you for— Please not to return my little present, Mrs Blissett,' added the young man suddenly with earnest pathos.

'So be it, Charles,' said the widow, deeply moved, and taking his hand in hers; 'and thank you kindly.'

'How very good of you, Mr Steen,' said Christie, with moist eyes. 'We shall always think of you when we have our chamber-concerts.'

Mrs Blissett had never before that occasion called him Charles, although her daughter, upon some of those river-excursions to which we have referred, had fallen into that sisterly habit. And thus that pleasant episode of the piano was happily ended.

Beside the water-trips which Steen and Christie were wont to take in the summer afternoons, they sometimes carried their portfolios (for they could use their pencils) into the beech-woods, or to the pleasant pasture-lands round which the river wound, or even on the breezy downs, and sketched; and upon one of these occasions, a circumstance occurred in connection with a certain third person, which, although apparently trivial, became of such vast importance to the chief characters in this history, that it demands a chapter for itself.

PULPIT TABLE-TALK.

SOME weeks ago, it was our task to notice in this Journal an account of Preachers and Preaching by one certainly not prejudiced in favour of his subject; we have now before us a very different book upon the same topic, written by one who himself wears 'the cloth,' and regards it with due, although by no means unreasoning respect. Like the Greenwich pensioner, who would allow no outsider to attack the institution to which he was attached, but permitted himself some latitude in that way, so the Venerable Dean Ramsay—an undoubted pillar of the Church—thinks it no harm to record an instance or two of eccentricity among the divines, while presenting them, upon the whole, in a very decorous shape to the lay public. He is so careful to eschew points of doctrine and disputes of theology, and reiterates his studied neutrality in that respect so often, that he reminds us of the poet Crabbe as represented in the *Rejected Addresses*: 'In the view of life and manners which I present, my clerical profession has taught me how extremely improper it would be, by any allusion, however slight, to give any uneasiness, however trivial, to any individual, however foolish or wicked.' But this over-carefulness to avoid offence is not a fault so common nowadays as to call for very severe animadversion, and *Pulpit Table-talk** is a pleasant little book, and well worth reading. There is a sly but very good-natured humour about the writer, which endears him personally to the reader, and a catholic admiration for all good preaching, no matter what special tenets may be held by the preacher, that is as rare as it is commendable.

We cannot say, judging from the specimens he affords us, that we share with Dean Ramsay his approbation of medieval eloquence. The divines of that period had views of theology not only narrow, but so very material, that they are repugnant to modern taste; still, there is a

grim force about them with which the apostles of a gentler creed cannot compare, and the pictures they draw are without doubt vivid enough, however coarsely executed. Listen to the Venerable Bede (who 'flourished' to some purpose in the seventh century, and wrote the annals of the Early Northern Church) upon the desperate condition of the Lost. The homily is upon the Christian Sabbath, and the preacher supposes St Paul and St Michael to petition that the poor condemned souls should have rest from their punishment upon Sundays. "It was the Lord's will that Paul should see the punishments of that place. He beheld trees all on fire, and sinners tormented on those trees; and some were hung by the feet, some by their hands, some by the hair, some by the neck, some by the tongue, and some by the arm. And again he saw a furnace of fire burning with seven flames, and many were punished in it; and there were seven plagues round about this furnace; the first was snow, the second ice, the third fire, the fourth blood, the fifth serpents, the sixth lightning, the seventh stench; and in that furnace itself were the souls of the sinners who repented not in this life. There they are tormented, and every one receiveth according to his works; some weep, some howl, some groan, some burn and desire to have rest, but find it not, because souls can never die." Again: "And Paul demanded of the angel, how many kinds of punishment there were in hell. And the angel said: There are a hundred and forty-four thousand; and if there were a hundred eloquent men, each having four iron tongues, that spoke from the beginning of the world, they could not reckon up the torments of hell." The preacher then draws the practical conclusion: "But let us, beloved brethren, hearing of these so great torments, be converted to our Lord, that we may be able to reign with the angels."

The dean, it will be acknowledged, has done no wrong to this preacher's memory in placing him in 'Class IV,' among those who used 'the alarming or threatening style,' rather than among the 'gentle and persuasive' divines. Bede's style finds favour now with our more ignorant preachers only, and but very rarely graces aught but a tub.

Bishop Latimer was as outspoken a preacher as ever smote a pulpit, but he was of such a joyous nature that it attracts us even now notwithstanding his rough style. He had a great contempt for 'dumb dogs,' as he did not hesitate to call 'unpreaching prelates,' and recommended to them, in the matter of diligence, to imitate—well, one of the very last persons that you can imagine. These unpreaching prelates, says he, 'are "lords, and no labourers, but the devil is diligent at his plough. He is no unpreaching prelate. He is no lordly loyterer from his cure, but a busy ploughman, so that among all the prelates, and among all the packs of them that have cure, the devil shall go for my money. For he still applyeth his business. Therefore, ye unpreaching prelates, learne of the devil to be diligent in doing of your office. Learne of the devil; and if you will not learne of God nor good men, for shame learne of the devil."

'He often turns upon the ladies, and attacks their abominations in dress. "What was *her* swadlyng cloth wherein holy Mary layed the Kyng of heaven and earth? No doubt, it was poor gere; peradventure it was her kercheefe which she tooke from her head, or such-like gere; for I thinke Mary had not much fine gere. She was not trimmed up as

* *Pulpit Table-talk*. By Dean Ramsay.

our women are now-a-days. I think, indeed, Mary had never a vardingale; for she used no such superfluities, as our fine damsels do now-a-days, for in the old time women were content with honest and single garments. Now they have found out these round-abouts; they were not invented then—the devil was not so cunning to make such gery, he found it out afterwarde. Therefore Mary had it not.” If the bishop thus expressed himself upon Crinolines, we wonder what he would have said about *chignons*! We are told what the great Irving did say upon this matter, although it had not in his time attained such monstrous and ridiculous proportions. He took for his text: ‘Let him that is on the house-top not come down,’ and pointed out that there was an express prohibition of such head-gear in the words, ‘top knot come down.’ Conceits of this kind were, in Irving’s case, mere flaws in what was otherwise almost the perfection of preaching. He was probably the most eloquent man that ever stood in a pulpit. ‘I shall not use,’ says he, on one occasion, ‘the reproachful language of the Baptist, and salute ye a generation of vipers; but I will not fear to salute ye a cold-hearted generation, who are not moved as ye should be by the overtures of God. Else why this standing upon the porch of salvation, and never entering in? Why feel conviction, and never obey? Why admire saintliness, and not seek it? *Why weary of the world, and not rise unto the world to come? Why apprehend death, and not think of it? Why foresee judgment, and not prepare for it? Why shudder at doom, and not flee from the wrath to come? Oh! flee from the wrath to come, for you are often warned. Already the axe is laid to the root of the trees, and they are falling fruitless into the fire unquenchable.*’

In the sentence we have ventured to italicise, how admirable is his knowledge of the world of sinners! How different is the argument he uses from the common platitudes about the ensnaring vanities of earth, and their supposed hold upon the Wicked. In most cases, they are quite as tired of them as are the Good, and indeed more so, for they have thoroughly explored them, and found only dust and bitterness.

Here follows a noble appeal to the benevolence of a congregation, unequalled, as it seems to us, for its indignant eloquence. ‘And here a fancy cometh upon my brain which I dare hardly utter, lest it overwhelm the feeling of this assembly, and unman myself into unbecoming weeping. I fancy in some sad abode of this city, some unvisited pallet of straw, a man, a Christian man, pining, perishing without an attendant, looking his last upon nakedness and misery, feeling his last in the pangs of hunger and thirst. The righteous spirit of the man being disembodied, I fancy it, to myself, arising to heaven encircled by an attendance of celestial spirits, daughters of mercy, who waited upon his soul when mankind deserted his body. This attended spirit I fancy rising to the habitation of God, and reporting in the righteous ear of the Governor of the earth how it fared with him amidst all the extravagance and outlay of this city. And saith the indignant Governor of men: “They had not a morsel of bread nor a drop of water to bestow upon My saint. Who of My angels will go for Me where I shall send? Go, thou angel of famine; break the growing ear with

thy wing, and let mildew feed upon their meal. Go, thou angel of the plague, and shake thy wings once more over the devoted city. Go, thou angel of fire, and consume all the neighbourhood where My saint suffered, unheeded and unpitied. Burn it; and let its flame not quench till their pavilions are a heap of smouldering ashes.”

After this, even John Wesley’s attacks on the Calvinistic doctrine of Election and Reprobation, declared by Southey to be ‘one of the finest examples of impassioned eloquence in the language,’ is almost tame and colourless. Like Dean Ramsay himself, ‘we are not concerned of course with the correctness or incorrectness of the theology; we are only concerned with John Wesley’s statement of it;’ and this is it. ‘This doctrine represents our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ the righteous, the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, as a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity; for it cannot be denied that He everywhere speaks as if He were *willing* that all men should be saved. You represent Him as mocking His helpless creatures, by offering what He never intends to give. You describe Him as saying one thing and meaning another; as pretending the love which He had not. Him in whose mouth was no guile, you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity. When nigh the city, He wept over it, and said: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not!” Now, if you say *they* would, but *He* would not, you represent Him—which, who could hear?—as weeping crocodile’s tears, weeping over the prey which Himself had doomed to destruction. Oh, how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud and spare not! How would he lift up his voice and say: “To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish!”’

The famous Robert Hall had a different way of dealing with this subject. He was of an independent spirit, and winced, naturally enough, under the control exercised, or attempted to be exercised, by English Dissenters over the preaching of their pastors. ‘A member of his flock, presuming on his weight and influence in the congregation, had called upon him and took him to task for not more frequently or more fully preaching *Predestination*, which he hoped would in future be more referred to. Hall, the most moderate and cautious of men on this dark question, was very indignant; he looked steadily at his censor for a time, and replied: “Sir, I perceive that *you* are predestinated to be an ass; and what is more, I see that you are determined to ‘make your calling and election sure!’”’

Some of the most striking preachers are eloquent only; their discourses, when printed, often seem dull and wordy. George Whitefield, the most prominent and popular preacher of whom the Nonconformists can boast, was one of this class. He could make himself audible to thirty thousand people, and hold them all attentive by his impassioned words; but he did not trust to words only. He practised ‘effects;’ and among them the following *tour de force*, which our author tells us he often repeated. ‘In preaching upon the discipline and self-denial of the saved, he wished to represent to his hearers that to secure this end they must enter the strait

gate and pursue the narrow way; that salvation was not to be won except with labour and self-denial, adding: "You seem to think it a very simple matter; you think it quite easy. Oh, just as easy as for me to catch that insect flying past me" (grasping at a fly or supposed fly). Then, after a little pause, he opened his hand, saying, in solemn tones: "But I have missed it!"

Few open-air preachers have George Whitefield's lungs, and still fewer his talent, and it is surprising what twaddle is listened to from itinerant divines, under the impression of its being 'improving.' There was a famous Methodist preacher of this sort in Somersetshire, whose reputation on one occasion brought quite a large party of 'the quality' of the county to hear him; but 'the poor man, confused at seeing so unusual a number of hearers of the higher rank before him, got quite confused, and wiping his forehead in his agitation, could only bring out in his Somersetshire dialect: "Leadies and gentlemen, I be aal in a puzzlement!"

Another Somersetshire preacher—a collier—adopted a very strange device to gain the attention of his hearers, who perhaps were of a sporting turn. 'He gave out for a text: "I can do all things." He then paused, and, looking at the Bible keenly, said, in his own native Somersetshire dialect: "What's that thee says, Paul—"I can do aal things?" I'll bet thee half-a-crown o' that." So he took half-a-crown out of his pocket, and put it on the book. "However," he added, "let's see what the apostle has to say for himself." So he read on the next words: "Through Christ that strengtheneth me." "Oh," says he, "if that's the terms of the bet, I'm off." And he put the half-crown into his pocket again, and preached his sermon on the power of Christian grace.'

The collier may have had an irreverent way with him; but after all, the thing most needed by our modern divines is the secret of interesting their congregations. Even John Wesley found it sometimes necessary to rouse nodding heads and half-shut eyes with the cry of 'Fire, fire!' and when his alarmed people cried out: 'Where, sir?—where?' he would earnestly and solemnly reply: 'In hell, for those who sleep under the preaching of the word.' Swift, taking the misfortune of Eutychus for his argument, began a sermon with: "I have chosen these words with design, if possible, to disturb some part in this audience of half an hour's sleep, for the convenience and exercise thereof this place at this season of the day is *very much celebrated*." Then he goes on, in allusion to Eutychus sleeping in the window: "The preachers now in the world, however they may exceed St Paul in the art of setting men to sleep, do extremely fall short of him in the power of working miracles—therefore, hearers are become more cautious, so as to choose more safe and convenient stations and postures for their repose, without hazard of their persons, and upon the whole matter choose rather to trust their destruction to a miracle than their safety."

A later divine, having to expatiate, in common with his professional brethren throughout the land, on the demise of the Princess Charlotte, took for his text one that should not only excite curiosity in his hearers, but which would certainly not be likely to be hit upon by any rival preacher: 'Take this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter.' From this mandate he ingeniously argued, that if a character such as Jezebel was,

should be properly buried, simply on account of her royal birth, what honour should not be paid to one so virtuous as the subject of his eulogy. The Rev. James Bonnar of Auchtermuchty, of the Relief Kirk, hit upon a very pleasant means of rousing a drowsy congregation. 'It was a very warm day; the church closely packed; the occasion the Monday following communion. He observed, with some annoyance, many of the congregation nodding and sleeping in their pews whilst he was preaching. He took his measures accordingly, and introduced the word "hyperbolic" into his sermon; but he paused, and said: "Now, my friends, some of you may not understand this word hyperbolic—I'll explain it. Suppose that I were to say that this congregation were *all* asleep in this church at the present time, I would be speaking hyperbolically; because" (looking round) "I don't believe much more than one-half of you are sleeping." The effect was instantaneous, and those who were nodding recovered themselves, and nudged their sleeping neighbours, and the preacher went on as if nothing had happened.'

In Crabbe's time, it seems people sometimes slept in church, for he describes the effects of the vehemence of a certain preacher thus—

He such sad coil with words of vengeance kept,
That our best sleepers startled as they slept;

a couplet which Dean Ramsay happily illustrates by a recent instance. 'An old clergyman, who had got a strong-lunged helper, observed that one of his hearers was becoming rather irregular in his attendance at church. Of course, the divine felt it his duty to visit the backslider, and he accordingly went to the house; but the guidman was not in. He inquired of the wife why John was so seldom at church now. "Oh, indeed, minister," she replied, without the least hesitation, "that young man ye've got roars sae loud that John canna sleep sae comfortable as he did when preachin' yersel, sae peaceably."

But, however lightly the subject of sleeping in church may be treated, the question of interesting a congregation is a most important one to be considered by all preachers, and is growing more so daily. In the general spread of knowledge, and (especially) of thought (that is, of the habit of thinking for ourselves), it is certainly not so easy as of yore for the clergy to arrest the attention of their hearers. It is true that we have no longer divines, like those of whom our author speaks, who attach such supreme importance to every syllable of the sacred text as to select one insignificant word to preach upon: 'Thus, a very devotional writer of the time of James I., William Austin, has left a sermon for St Bartholomew's Day (although, by the by, he was a layman) on the words "*and Bartholomew*." He points out how the name of this apostle never occurs in Scripture except when preceded by the copulative particle "and." He deduces from this fact the general Christian duty and advantage of our giving each other mutual help and kindly assistance, and he evolves this doctrine entirely from this use made by the sacred writers of the word "*and*." But we have heard of a preacher of this class meeting with a repartee of an equally ingenious character with his own sermon. He was a candidate for a lectureship, and had to deliver a discourse before the trustees of the endowment, in the way of competition; so he was

determined to shew how clever he could be, and took for his text the single word "*but*." He deduced from thence the great truth and the important doctrine that no position is without some corresponding cross or opposite trial. Naaman was a mighty man of valour and honourable, *but* he was a leper. The five cities of the plain were fruitful as the garden of Eden, *but* the men of Sodom were awful sinners. The inhabitants of Ai put the Israelites to flight, *but* they wist not of the liars in wait behind the city. I called you, *but* ye answered not. Come, for all things are ready, *but* they would not come: and so on. When the clerical competitor came down to the vestry, the senior trustee of the lectureship met him, and politely remarked: "Sir, you gave us a most ingenious discourse, and we are much obliged to you; *but* we don't think you are the preacher that will do for us." There are, we say, happily few such hair-splitters in our modern pulpits as these; yet, there is no doubt that the attraction of pulpit discourses is on the wane (at all events in England), and it behoves our clergy to look to it. Dean Ramsay calculates that every Sabbath-day, in the churches and chapels of Great Britain, there are delivered seventy-five thousand sermons, which is at the rate of nearly Four Millions *per annum*. It is not uncharitable to remark that in some of these there is room for improvement, and those who compose them will do well to cast their eyes over the present volume. In a very unambitious, unpretending way, our author has given instances of style and manner well worthy of imitation, as well as pointed out others—the faults of which are by no means obsolete—that it is highly necessary to eschew.

THE SUNBEAM.

I COME forth from God's mouth,
East and west, north and south,
Across y' swart brow of each morrow;
I fling down a red flush
Fathoms far through the hush
Of darkness, and slumber, and sorrow.

As I come, ebon Night
Shimmers over all white,
And sullenly folds each broad pinion;
And glad island and sea,
From her thralldom set free,
Speed back to my golden dominion.

With bars of bright glory,
I braid those peaks hoary,
Which plume the old hills everlasting;
And I make the lush plain
Laugh with grape and with grain,
The needs of Earth's children forecasting.

I embroider the wold
With vermilion and gold;
With silver I drape the dark river;
While adown through the glade,
Trembling tangles of shade
I twist, as the light aspens quiver.

'Tis my fairy feet print
Every vein, stain, and tint

Which prank out the sweet face of each flower;
And by my chemic skill,
With rich incense I fill
Every blossom that accents Ladye's bower.

My ladder of amber,
Up which the clouds clamber,
From the windows of heaven I let down;
And with fretwork of fire,
I gird rampart and spire,
And the proud granite battlement crown.

All ablush with the bliss
Of my hot noontide kiss,
Crimson Summer comes laughing along;
And bluff Autumn's gold cup
With red wine I fill up,
And awaken his soul into song.

As the gray gloaming dies
From December's dim eyes,
And the winds round his bier wail aloud,
Flashing jewels I make
Of each crystalline flake
Brought by Winter's white hands for his shroud.

When the ten thousand feet
Of the great storm-king beat
The green bosom of earth fast and loud,
I make foreland and ridge
The piers of my bridge,
Built with blocks quarried out of the cloud.

And over and under
Where hurtles the thunder,
I dance in right merry defiance;
Nor can sleet nor can hail
Harm one plate of my mail,
Despite their spiteful alliance.

I leap down from the skies,
To beguile weary eyes
All wet with the night-dews of anguish;
Through the lattice I creep
Where despairing hearts weep,
As Hope's last lights flicker and languish.

I smile with a splendour
Aye solemn and tender,
O'er the death-sleep of those gone before;
While above the cold sod,
Like a sermon from God,
The wild-flower preaches *trust evermore*.

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